

BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

LEVITICUS 23-24

FESTIVALS TO THE LORD

We are accustomed to having church festivals on a regular basis in our congregations (e.g. Christmas and Easter). The Israelites too had special festivals of worship to the LORD. These were outlined for them by the LORD Himself. Each festival was designed to help them remember their God. Each festival was to involve all the people. “These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.”

Chapter 23:3

The Sabbath

First is a reminder of the Sabbath day. The seventh day of the week was a weekly “festival” where they were to *rest* from all their labors.

- ! Two lambs were sacrificed on the Sabbath instead of one.
- ! How did the Sabbath Day remind the people of the coming Savior?
- ! How were days of rest important to the *worship* of the people?

Chapter 23:4-8

The Passover

At twilight on the 14th day of the first month (equivalent to our March/April) Israel was to observe the Passover. The feast of Unleavened bread would begin on the 15th just as the LORD had directed them earlier through Moses (Ex 12). This celebration was to remind them of the way in which the LORD had led them out of Egypt— how the angel of death *passed over* the houses with blood sprinkled on the doorposts. It was also a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God.

Chapter 23:9-14

Festival of Firstfruits

On the 16th day of the first month, the LORD asked the people to bring Him the *first* of their harvest and offer it before Him. Thus the first sheaf of grain from the field would be presented along with a year-old unblemished lamb, a grain offering, and a drink offering.

- ! How does offering the firstfruits show both praise and trust?
- ! Look at how the New Testament uses the concept of firstfruits (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20; Jb 1:18; Rev 14:4)
- ! How might we give our firstfruits to the LORD?

After the festival of firstfruits, the Israelites were to count off seven weeks. On the 50th day after the wave offering from v10, the feast of weeks was celebrated. This was the Israelites Thanksgiving festival (occurring in May/June by our calendars). It coincided with the end of their grain harvest.

Presented to the LORD was:

Two loaves of bread make *with* yeast
 Seven male lambs a year old without defect
 One young bull
 Two rams
 One male goat (for sin offering)
 Two lambs a year old (for a fellowship offering)

THE FESTIVALS / Leviticus 23

Besides enjoying one Sabbath day of rest each week, the Israelites also enjoyed 19 days when national holidays were celebrated.	Festival	What It Celebrated	Its Importance
	Passover One day (Leviticus 23:5)	When God spared the lives of Israel's firstborn children in Egypt and freed the Hebrews from slavery	Reminded the people of God's deliverance
	Unleavened Bread Seven days (Leviticus 23:6-8)	The exodus from Egypt	Reminded the people they were leaving the old life behind and entering a new way of living
	Firstfruits One day (Leviticus 23:9-14)	The first crops of the barley harvest	Reminded the people how God provided for them
	Pentecost (Harvest) One day (Leviticus 23:15-22)	The end of the barley harvest and beginning of the wheat harvest	Showed joy and thanksgiving over the bountiful harvest
	Trumpets One day (Leviticus 23:23-25)	The beginning of the seventh month (civil new year)	Expressed joy and thanksgiving to God
	Day of Atonement One day (Leviticus 23:26-32)	The removal of sin from the people and the nation	Restored fellowship with God
	Shelters Seven days (Leviticus 23:33-43)	God's protection and guidance in the wilderness	Renewed Israel's commitment to God and trust in his guidance and protection

From *Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts and Maps*

In addition, no regular work was to be done on the day of this sacred assembly. Notice that there were a lot of offering given in connection with the feast of weeks. This makes sense. The harvest was over and the people had much for which to be thankful!

Chapter 23:23-25 Feast of Trumpets

The feast of trumpets was celebrated in the seventh month, the month of T i s h r i (September/October). This was the time of the fruit harvest and marked the beginning of the agricultural year. On the first day of this month, trumpets were blown to

commemorate a sacred assembly. The people were to do no regular work on this day, but they were to present offering to the LORD. This feast later became known as *Rosh Hashanah*, or the Jewish new year's day.

Chapter 23:26-32

The Day of Atonement

On the tenth day of the seventh month, the Israelites were to celebrate the Day of Atonement as described earlier in chapter 16. Anyone who did not observe the Day of Atonement was to be cut off from the people.

Chapter 23:33-44

Feast of Tabernacles

The feast of tabernacles (or *booths*) was a week-long thanksgiving celebration— this time in connection with the fall harvest. It would take place in the seventh month from the 15th to the 21st. The festival was celebrated by rest from regular work and by special offerings to the LORD.

The unique aspect of this festival was that the Israelites were to construct and live in small booths for seven days. This was to remind them of the temporary housing that they lived in when the LORD brought them out of Egypt.

Chapter 24:1-9

Tending the Tabernacle

The lamps of the tabernacle were to be kept burning continually.

! What do you think was the significance of the continually burning lamps?

The showbread was also to be tended. Each week it would be replaced by fresh loaves, set in rows on the gold table, and surrounded with incense which would later be offered on the altar. The priests (but not their families) were allowed to eat the showbread.

Chapter 24:10-16, 23

The Punishment for Blasphemy

This chapter ends with a brief narrative section. The son of an Israelite woman is found cursing the name of God. The LORD ordered the blasphemer to be taken outside the camp and stoned to death. “If anyone curses God, he will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death.

Chapter 24:17-22

Punishment for Unlawful Killing

Life was regarded as precious, and a punishment must fit the crime. If the life of an animal was taken, restitution would have to be made. If the life of a human was taken, the life of the murderer would be taken.

- ! What is *cursing*?
- ! The sin of blasphemy was taken seriously by the Jews in New Testament times as well. Consider Mt 26:65 and Ac 6:11
- ! How does Mt 5:38 relate to this section of Leviticus?

The Jewish Calendar

The Jews used two kinds of calendars:

Civil Calendar—official calendar of kings, childbirth, and contracts.

Sacred Calendar—from which festivals were computed.

NAMES OF MONTHS	CORRESPONDS WITH	NO. OF DAYS	MONTH OF CIVIL YEAR	MONTH OF SACRED YEAR
TISHRI	Sept.–Oct.	30 days	1st	7th
HESHVAN	Oct.–Nov.	29 or 30	2nd	8th
CHISLEV	Nov.–Dec.	29 or 30	3rd	9th
TEBETH	Dec.–Jan.	29	4th	10th
SHEBAT	Jan.–Feb.	30	5th	11th
ADAR	Feb.–Mar.	29 or 30	6th	12th
NISAN	Mar.–Apr.	30	7th	1st
IYAR	Apr.–May	29	8th	2nd
SIVAN	May–June	30	9th	3rd
TAMMUZ	June–July	29	10th	4th
AB	July–Aug.	30	11th	5th
*ELUL	Aug.–Sept.	29	12th	6th

The Jewish day was from sunset to sunset, in 8 equal parts:

FIRST WATCHSUNSET TO 9 P.M.

SECOND WATCH9 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT

THIRD WATCHMIDNIGHT TO 3 A.M.

FOURTH WATCH3 A.M. TO SUNRISE

FIRST HOURSUNRISE TO 9 A.M.

THIRD HOUR9 A.M. TO NOON

SIXTH HOURNOON TO 3 P.M.

NINTH HOUR3 P.M. TO SUNSET

*Hebrew months were alternately 30 and 29 days long. Their year, shorter than ours, had 354 days. Therefore, about every three years (7 times in 19 years) an extra 29-day month, VEADAR, was added between ADAR and NISAN.

From *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*